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SPECIAL EDUCATION
FOR
EDUCABLE MENTALLY RETARDED CHILDREN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I Laws	1
II Definition of Mental Retardation	1
III Identification and Placement for Educable Retarded Classes	1
IV Intelligence Levels and the Grouping of Children	3
V Class Description	3
VI Making Application	5
VII Classroom Programs	5
VIII Parent and Community Acceptance	5
IX Reimbursement	7
X Certification	8
XI Provisional Certification	10
Appendix	11

EDUCABLE MENTALLY RETARDED CLASSES

I. Laws

The 1957 session of the Minnesota Legislature enacted new laws that relate to education of handicapped children. Laws 1957, Chapter 867 require school districts and unorganized territories to provide special instructions for children who are mentally retarded as defined by the standards of the state board of education. These laws fix the primary responsibility for providing this service with the local school.

II. Definition of Mental Retardation

The American Association on Mental Deficiency¹ has used the following criteria in defining mental retardation.

1. Inadequate social adjustment
2. Reduced learning capacity
3. Slow rate of maturation

Mental retardation is a condition and not a disease. It may result from any one or a combination of a wide variety of causes. It is proper to regard mental retardation as a dynamic rather than a stable condition. This is to say that in most cases mentally retarded children are amenable to improvement through education and other procedures even though the basic cerebral defect is generally irreversible. The educable retarded child as defined below, is one who does not profit adequately from the general curriculum of the public schools, but who can be educated to become socially adequate and occupationally competent, provided special educational facilities are furnished. It is the purpose of this manual to outline regulations, policies and standards concerning the way in which Minnesota Public Schools are authorized to provide special education services.

EDUCABLE RETARDED are those children who score approximately between I.Q. 50 and 80 on individually administered intelligence tests and for whom special class placement in schools is recommended. Generally such children show severe retardation in academic subjects, while in non-academic subjects they are often at a level much closer to the normal child. It is presumed that most educable retarded persons will eventually learn some academic skills to a functional level and be able to live independently in society, except on occasions of particular stress or when under severe secondary hardships.

III. Identification and Placement for Educable Retarded Classes

A. Preliminary Screening - Teacher Evaluation

The classroom teacher is in a key position to observe a child's progress. Low intelligence may be reflected in poor academic achievement or delayed maturation when a child is compared with other children of the same chronological age.

1 Statistical manual of the American Association on Mental Deficiency - 4th Edition, Part 1 Etiological classification by the Committee on Nomenclature, 1957

B. Preliminary Screening - Group Intelligence Tests

In addition to teacher evaluation, group tests are useful instruments for screening children for special class placement. They can be administered to a group by the classroom teacher or other school personnel. Group intelligence tests are available at different grade and age levels. The results on group intelligence tests indicating low ability often are an indication that a child should be given further consideration for special class placement. The scores obtained on group intelligence tests should, however, be viewed with many reservations and in no case can they be used for placing a child in a special class.

Placement - Individual Intelligence Tests

- C. Eligibility of a child for special class program must be based in part on an individual psychological examination given by a certified psychologist. (Under certain conditions, the individual psychological examination may be given by a person not certified as a psychologist - see clause D.) Other information should be considered such as the results of a medical examination, achievement test scores, and the observation of the classroom teacher. Final placement in a class for educable, retarded children must be recommended by a certified psychologist and the special education supervisor of the local school program. Such placement may be made directly by local school officials if a qualified special education supervisor is employed. Otherwise, the State Director of Special Education must approve the placement.

D. Tentative Placement (School Years 1957-58 and 1958-59)

The tentative plan for selecting children for special classes may be used only during the school years 1957-58 and 1958-59. The acute shortage of certified psychologists throughout the state has resulted in long delays in testing children who are in need of special education. Many school systems have persons on their staffs who have had training in individual mental testing of children although they are not certified psychologists. To help in the testing of children in schools where such a person is available and can do the individual testing, the test results will be provisionally accepted for special program placement. This will enable school systems to immediately plan for/or initiate special education services. Acceptance of the test results of a noncertified tester is subject to the following conditions:

1. The tester has had a course in individual mental testing of children from an accredited college or university.
2. The superintendent of the school district in which the tester is employed must verify that the tester has had a course in individual mental testing of children from an accredited university or college.

3. All test record forms with complete responses and scoring shall be available to a certified psychologist who will confer with the tester on individual tests and approve the results obtained on each test.
4. The individual intelligence tests used shall be the Stanford Binet (I or M) and/or the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children. When the Section of Special Education receives a report from a certified psychologist confirming the results of the provisional test, final approval for special class placement will be given consideration.

IV. Intelligence Levels and the Grouping of Children

Minnesota State Department of Education Standards sets the approximate I.Q. limits of from 50 to 80 for a child to be eligible for a Group I Educable Retarded Class. The chronological age range is from 5-0 to 21-0. Many children who score near the upper I.Q. limits for special class placement, do not need to be placed in special classes. Others of the same I.Q. will need individualized instruction and can best be served in special classes. It is not required that all children with I. Q.'s below 80 be placed in special classes. The mental age span of retarded children in a school should be carefully considered when a class is being planned or in the placement of a child in an existing class.

It is suggested that in forming classes, every effort be made to keep them as homogeneous as possible. In larger communities two levels of educable classes for retarded may be considered. One level might include the children who score approximately 50-65 I.Q. and a second level class of children who score 65-80 I.Q. Certainly children could not be placed in a group by I.Q. alone, but would need to be evaluated as to social maturity, academic achievement, chronological age and other factors. It is expected that children would be moved from one class level to another as their particular cases indicated.

Another factor to be considered in grouping children is their chronological age. A suggested age grouping is 6-9, 9-12, and 12 or 13 through high school age.

V. Class (Description)

A. Class size

The size of an educable class may be from 5 to 15 pupils, with variations as outlined in the Administrative Manual. In any one class, however, the chronological age range should be limited to not more than five years. Local community problems will determine the type of class which is initiated first. However, the class most often initiated in a school district is an educable class for mentally retarded children with chronological ages of approximately 7-0 to 11-0. The I.Q. range may be from 50 to 80. The individual mental levels of the children should be given close consideration when planning a class. (See IV) Very often schools later divide their elementary class into two classes, and still later, organize Junior High and Senior High special classes.

B. Teacher Qualification

The teacher of a class for the mentally retarded must have a basic teacher's certificate as well as a special certificate for teaching mentally retarded for the school district to be reimbursed. Other desirable qualities for a teacher of the retarded are emotional stability, flexibility, general maturity, skill in shifting from one grade level to another, ability to work constructively with parents, outstanding resourcefulness, and good intelligence.

C. Classroom (Standards)

The following are recommendations for classroom provisions for an educable class for mentally retarded:¹

1. General

- a. Classes should be located in the building where there are grades that serve normal children of the same age. Whenever possible this should be the neighborhood school so that the child can walk or ride to and from school in the same manner as other children.
- b. Such children usually have privileges of recreation periods, assemblies, work in art, music, library, craft work, physical education, excursions, and audio and visual aids that are provided for other children, and when conditions are suitable, with other children. When participating in these activities, the children should be with their own age group.
- c. Classes should approximate one-half of an average size class. Early emphasis is placed on developing capacities for self-support and good social behavior.

2. Classroom

- a. A complete regular sized classroom should be provided, largely self-contained, with space for work counters, work benches, cabinets, shelving, and filing space. Space should be provided for an aquarium, plant boxes, easels, play tables, sand table and a piano. Storage space is needed for books, toys, musical instruments, and hand tools. Equipment and storage will be adapted to age group of pupils or varied age of pupils. Work area may be separated from classes by a glass partition.
- b. If provision for arts and crafts and homemaking are not ordinarily available, provision should be made for them for special class pupils.
- c. Adjacent or connected with the classroom, separate toilets for boys and girls should be provided (when possible).

¹ Guide for Educational Planning of Public School Buildings and Sites in Minn., State Dept. of Education, St. Paul 1, Oct. 1957. Code V-2 (Revised) Research Project No. 10.

C. Supplies and Equipment

1. The regulations that apply to supplies and equipment are that
 - a. Reimbursement will be limited to one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the cost of special equipment and supplies required for instruction and service for the type of class maintained, not to exceed \$50.00 per pupil per annum.
 - b. Each item for which reimbursement is claimed, such as laundry, mental and physical examinations, etc., must be listed separately and itemized in the final report.
2. Special equipment for a class of mentally retarded children may include items such as workbooks, remedial reading texts, work benches, craft supplies, etc. A suggested list of equipment for an educable mentally retarded class may be secured by writing the Section of Special Education, State Department of Education, St. Paul, Minnesota.

VI. Making Application

After children who need special education have been identified and given individual psychological examinations, the superintendent of schools should write to the Director of Special Education, State Department of Education, St. Paul 1, Minnesota, asking for special class forms.

VII. Classroom Programs

A. Initiation of a class

1. It is advantageous in starting a new class to begin with a small group of pupils (6-8) and gradually add other pupils at the rate of one or two a week. In the second and succeeding years, this is usually not necessary.
2. A list of selected references on education of retarded children is included in the appendix to this bulletin.

VIII. Parent and Community Acceptance

A. Community Acceptance

A part of the initial planning for starting a special class for retarded children should be in gaining public understanding and acceptance. It is essential that the community have some facts about mental retardation, such as the cause, kinds, degrees, incidence, and future for the retarded child if the community is to support special education. Public education programs can be arranged through P.T.A.'s, church groups, or by contacting the local association of parents of retarded children. If there is no parent group in the community, contact the Minnesota Association for Retarded Children. When there is good public understanding, the acceptance of retardation in their child by individual parents is easier.

B. Parent Counseling

Telling parents that their child is retarded can be one of the most difficult tasks an educator faces. For the parents, even if they are aware of their child's retardation, the meeting with school officials to plan for their child is often an extremely threatening situation. If at all possible, a person with training in mental retardation and counseling should explain the child's difficulties to the parents. There are few articles in the literature which offer specific suggestion on counseling parents of retarded children. The ten points which follow are taken from an article written by a parent of a retarded youngster and directed to professional persons who counsel parents of retarded children.¹

1. "Tell us the nature of the problem as soon as possible."
It is a wise counselor who knows when he does not have the answers and is willing to admit it.
2. "Always see both parents"
It is very difficult for a mother to go home and restate, interpret, and answer questions about a problem she does not clearly understand herself. Another reason for seeing both parents is that they both need to be pulled along together in their understanding and acceptance.
3. "Watch your language"
Parents need to understand the implications of their problem, but too often they are given professional jargon or at the other extreme, plain talk of an obnoxious variety.
4. "Help us to see that this is OUR problem"
One way is by not taking the problem over for the parents.
5. "Help us to understand our problem"
Parents differ in the quantity and quality of information they can absorb during different phases of this problem. Regardless of what parents are able to read and absorb, they will always have questions to ask.
6. "Know your resources"
Educators should know Minnesota's Institutional Program, the Guardianship provisions under the law as well as other referral sources.
7. "Never put parents on the defensive"
Never put parents of retarded children on the defensive for errors that they make in raising their child.
8. "Remember that parents of retarded children are just people"
You cannot generalize about parents of retarded children any more than you can generalize about retarded children.

1 Some Pointers for Professionals, Letha L. Patterson - Children, Jan. Feb., 1956. United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

9. "Remember that parents will always be emotionally involved with their problem and their own child, regardless of the 'objectivity' they may have about the problem."
10. "Remember the importance of your attitude toward the parents" Be objective about the problem but not about the parents themselves. Try to place yourself in the position of the parents in the process of helping them.

IX. Reimbursement

A. Professional Employees

1. Reimbursement will be on the basis of two-thirds ($2/3$) of the salary, not to exceed \$3,600 per annum for professional employees devoting full time to teaching and rendering service to mentally handicapped children.
2. Reimbursement for salaries of part-time teachers and other professional personnel, will be pro-rated in proportion to the number of hours devoted in rendering service to the handicapped child.
3. For a school district to receive reimbursement for a teacher of a class of mentally retarded, the teacher must hold a special certificate or be in the process of fulfilling certain requirements towards certification. (See X.)

B. Transportation

1. For mentally retarded children
 - a. Schedule of rates for transportation of one child shall be:
 - (1) First mile or fraction thereof, forty-five cents per mile per day, one way.
 - (2) For each additional mile or fraction thereof, ten cents per mile per day, one way.
 - b. Limitations
 - (1) Reimbursement aid for this service will be made from state funds for an amount not to exceed \$.95 per child per day or \$160 per child per annum.
2. General
 - a. In case transportation is impractical, the school board may make arrangements to board and lodge the handicapped child at some home, thereby making school accessible for the child.
 - b. Aid will be paid only for days such pupils are transported or boarded and in attendance at school.

- c. Where other pupils are transported on the same school bus with handicapped children, the costs to be used in determining the reimbursement aid for transportation will be prorated on the basis of the average cost per pupil for all pupils conveyed on such bus or buses.
- d. In no case will the aid exceed the actual sums paid out by the school district for transportation or board and lodging.
- e. The applications and reports for reimbursement aid for transportation or board and lodging of handicapped children are to be made to the State Board of Education by the school board of the district wherein such child or children reside.

X. Certification

- A. There are three ways to be certified to teach special classes for the retarded child in the State of Minnesota. Each of the three plans is outlined below. A teacher may follow any one of the programs.
 - 1. A student may graduate from a four year course at an accredited training institution with a major in teaching mentally retarded children. No teacher training institution in Minnesota presently offers such a program. Institutions outside the state of Minnesota offering such a special sequence of training may be found by contacting "College and University Programs for the Preparation of Teachers of Exceptional Children" the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare; Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C. 1954, 35¢ or Opportunities for Professional Preparation in the Field of Education of Mentally Retarded Children, National Association for Retarded Children, 99 University Place, New York 3, N. Y. - 50¢
 - 2. A student who graduates from a four year college course of an accredited teacher training institution and who earns a certificate to teach in regular elementary or secondary school classes may be certified to teach in a special class upon completion of a minor in the field of teaching the mentally retarded. The University of Minnesota offers such a minor, and several state colleges are moving to establish such programs. This plan is usually followed by a student who goes directly into college from high school and who completes the regular 4 year college program with a minor in teaching retarded children. This plan is not followed by teachers who already have two or more years of teaching experience.

For information consult the current bulletin of the College of Education of the University of Minnesota, which may be obtained by writing to the Information Desk, Administration Bldg., University of Minn., Minneapolis 14. To inquire about teachers who have completed this sequence of training, write for credentials to the Bureau of Recommendations of the College of Education, University of Minnesota, 102 Burton Hall, or the Special Education Laboratory, 14 Pattee Hall.

3. A third method for certifying teachers of retarded children is the plan followed most frequently at the present time. To qualify under this plan, an individual must first have a valid teaching certificate for elementary or secondary schools. Secondly, the individual must have had a minimum of two years of successful teaching experience. Third, the individual must complete a pattern of course work which is equivalent to a minor in the field of teaching retarded children. Whether a particular pattern is equivalent to a minor is decided by the State Department of Education in consultation with staff members of the teacher training institution approved to offer a minor in this special field. The course work which comprises the minor may include courses taken at the undergraduate level as well as courses taken after obtaining the bachelor's degree. However, this plan does not require a bachelor's degree. The certificate to teach retarded children issued under Plan 3 is limited by the basic certificate to teach in the elementary or secondary schools. That is, teachers who hold only the elementary credential may, upon completion of the minor in teaching retarded children, (or its equivalent) teach a class of mentally retarded children only at the elementary level. Similarly, those whose regular certificate is at the secondary school level, may teach only mentally retarded children who are in the secondary school programs. Some adjustments are made occasionally so that teachers who hold an elementary certificate and the certificate to teach mentally retarded children may be employed in special classes at the junior high school level.

Considerable flexibility is allowed in choosing courses to be "equivalent to a minor" in teaching retarded children. Generally courses in the following areas are accepted:

Introductory courses on the Education or Psychology of
Exceptional Children

Psychology of Mental Deficiency, Nature of Mental De-
ficiency

Methods courses pertaining to the mentally retarded

Advanced courses in child development, child psychology,
adolescent psychology, etc.

Tests and Measurement

Special (credit) workshops on problems of mental retarda-
tion

Abnormal psychology, behavior problems of children, etc.

Sociology of the family

Guidance and counseling procedure

Diagnostic and remedial instruction

Parent interviewing and consultation

Arts and Crafts for Special Class Teachers

XI. Provisional Certification

A provisional certificate may be obtained as follows:

A provisional certificate to teach in state-aided classes for mentally retarded children is issued if a teacher holds a regular teaching certificate, has two years of experience and has completed at least 8 quarter credits in course work applicable as a minor. This is a 2 year non-renewable certificate. A minor is defined to require a minimum of 23 credits applicable in the special field. A teacher who enters special class work on a provisional certificate, must plan to complete a total of 23 credits to qualify for full certification as a teacher of mentally retarded within a 2 year period following provisional certification.

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Dolch	<u>Helping Handicapped Children in School</u>	Garrad
Doll	<u>Mental Deficiency</u>	Devereux
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Tredgold	<u>A Textbook of Mental Deficiency</u>	Williams and Wilkins
Wallin	<u>Education of Mentally Handicapped Children</u>	Harper